

A Time to Pray

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[0 : 00] Amen. As you're there in your Bible, James chapter 5, verses 13 through 18, please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together.

And I'll say there are Bibles in the pews. If you don't have one with you this morning that you can use, and please take that Bible home today. If you don't own a Bible, in our hopes that you'll continue to be reading the Word of God. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain. And for three years and six months, it did not rain on the earth.

[1 : 15] Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. May God add a blessing to the reading of his Word. Would you please be seated? In Mark Twain's book, Huckleberry Finn, there is a part where Huck contemplates the usefulness and effectiveness of prayer.

He had been told to pray every day, and that whatever he prayed for, he would receive. But that hadn't worked out for Huck.

He had been praying for fishing hooks, but had not received any. And he's thinking, and he's contemplating, and he's of the impression that his prayers just don't seem to work.

That gets him thinking about other people, and the needs that they have, and what he thinks that they've probably been praying for. But like him, they have yet to receive an answer to those prayers.

That prayer didn't seem to work for them either. And so having analyzed all of this, Huck concludes that when it comes to prayer, there ain't nothing in it.

[2 : 36] And I know that's a fictional story. Huck Finn is not a real person. But I do believe that that's the attitude of many Christians today.

Maybe it's an attitude that you have. That when it comes to prayer, there ain't nothing in it. Now, as Christians, you'd never admit that.

I believe that all of us think and would say that prayer is important. But do we really believe that it is? Wouldn't you agree that the amount of time that you give to something or don't give to something determines how much you value that thing?

Every Sunday, my phone gives me an update of how much time I've spent looking at it that week. It averages how many hours I spent looking at it each day.

And then it compares that number, that average, to the week before. And then it gives me a percentage that tells me how much my screen time either increased or decreased over the course of the week.

[3 : 51] And based upon some of the groanings I've already heard, I'm often convicted by that statistic. But what if there are a way to record how much time we actually spent in prayer each week like that?

I think a lot of us would be convicted by the hours that we spend looking at our phones compared to the minutes that we spend each day with God in prayer.

Maybe our prayerlessness is due to ignorance. Just not knowing Scripture. Not knowing how much the Bible says about the importance of prayer.

Maybe our lives, we're convinced, are just too busy. We feel too tired to pray. Or we just forget to make time for prayer.

Whatever the case may be, I think if we're honest with ourselves, the truth is that like Huck Finn, when it comes to prayer, our attitude, as revealed by the little amount of time we spend in prayer, is there ain't nothing in it.

[5 : 14] In our text today, James confronts such attitudes. In these six verses, James mentions prayer seven times.

As James closes his letter, he is consumed with the power of prayer and seeks to infuse his passion for it into the hearts of his readers.

He wants them to not only understand, but believe that there is power in prayer. And that's the main idea for this morning's sermon. There is power in prayer.

Remember that James' original audience was comprised primarily of Jews who had recently become Christians soon after Jesus' ascension to heaven.

They had recently fled Palestine as a result of being persecuted. We read about that in Acts chapter 8, verses 1 through 4. And being both Jewish by ancestry and Christians by faith, they were facing hostility from pagan cultures, which they were now forced to reside in.

[6 : 26] They were people who James had mentioned is aware that they have suffered tremendously. They've suffered through trials of various kinds.

And here in James chapter 5, verses 13 through 18, he again exhorts them not to collapse under the weight of their suffering and affliction, but to pray.

And in doing so, he reminds them and us of four reasons why there is power in prayer. But before moving on to those reasons, it's important that we take time to address the ways in which this passage has been misinterpreted and misunderstood.

As a matter of fact, this passage has been a battleground for interpreters of the Bible for centuries. Many groups have forced a meaning on this text that does not fit its context.

Roman Catholics use this verse, this passage, to support the sacrament of extreme unction. Faith healers have twisted this passage in many ways to suggest that all Christians are guaranteed miraculous healing through prayer.

[7 : 40] Others see this verse as setting a precedent for anointing people with oil as if the oil itself contains some kind of mystical or magical powers and abilities to cure sick people.

This passage can be problematic to interpret because it raises several difficult questions for us.

What kind of suffering and sickness does James have in mind in verses 13 through 14?

Why are the elders singled out as the group who should pray in verse 14 instead of other believers?

Why anoint people with oil? What is the prayer of faith?

And how does that save one who is sick? Why does James insert an illustration at the end in verses 17 through 18 about rain in a passage that appears to be about healing?

Well, context determines meaning. For example, if I said to you, there is water in the trunk, that could mean a number of different things.

[8 : 51] If my wife, for example, walked into our house and she was carrying bags of groceries and she said to me, there's water in the trunk, I'd know that she had a package of bottled water in the back of the car that she wanted me to help carry in.

If I was at the zoo with my kids and one of my kids said to me, if I was at the zoo with my kids and one of my kids said there's water in the trunk, obviously they'd probably be talking about us watching elephants as they bathed using water in their trunk to clean themselves.

You get my point. Hopefully, trunk can refer to the back of a car, an elephant's nose, a tree, or a box. Context helps us determine what kind of trunk the speaker or writer has in mind.

The Bible is not a random collection of verses that may be interpreted in isolation. To rightly understand a verse, you must understand the verses and the passages that surround it, what came before it, what came after it.

Your interpretation of it must be enlightened by the rest of that book, by the rest of the Bible. To answer the difficult questions that this passage presents, we must keep in mind all that James has already said to this point and compare that with the rest of the Bible.

[10 : 23] But what is clear is that the theme of this passage is prayer. James is calling for individuals, elders, elders, and the whole congregation of the church to pray.

And as we understand this passage in context, what we see is James' compassion for believers, for his brothers and his sisters in Christ, who are suffering, not primarily from physical ailments, but spiritual weakness, spiritual exhaustion, spiritual depression, spiritual defeat, and his encouragement for them and for us, and especially those who feel spiritually faint, weary, and weak, is that there is power in prayer.

So now let's look at the four reasons why, or that he gives or provides to encourage us about the power of prayer.

First reason, prayer provides comfort. Prayer provides comfort. He says in verse 13, The Greek word for suffering in verse 13 refers to enduring evil treatment at the hands of another.

In the case of these Christians, In the case of these Christians, the primary source of their suffering was persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. I mean, try to imagine what they had recently gone through.

[12:07] Forced out of their homes, kicked out of their community, they lost jobs, they lost friends, they lost family members for their faith, and they were continually being mistreated in their new communities that they were living in.

These Christians had suffered a lot of loss. It seemed like the hits just kept coming. And James' instruction to them isn't, Well, you know what?

Just suck it up. Right? And his instruction to them wasn't, You shouldn't feel that way. Instead, he tells them, You need to pray.

Now some people might read verse 13, read this entire passage about prayer and think, That's it? What good will that do?

That's the way a lot of people in our culture think about prayer. That's the way a lot of people in our culture approach prayer. But prayer is not wishful thinking.

[13:10] It's not sending good vibes. It's not the power of positive thinking. Prayer is communication with God.

You know God? The one who created all things? Who sustains all things? And has ultimate, unlimited, unmatched power over all things?

In Christ, we have direct access to him. All of us do. If you are in Christ. You know, a comment that I hear and that bothers me is this thought from other Christians that as a pastor, I somehow have or possess a direct line to God that they don't have.

And it reminds me of, you remember the old Batman TV show with Adam West? And Commissioner Gordon, whenever some dastardly villain was in Gotham City, and the police were helpless to do anything about it, what would he do?

He'd pick up that red phone in his office. It was a direct line to Batman, who would come and save the day. Well, the Bible says that in Christ, we all who have been saved by his grace have a direct line, direct access to him.

[14:46] We read about that in Hebrews 4.16. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

That is amazing. If you wanted to reach someone like the president in our society, you'd have to go through a lot of channels to get to him.

And you know what? You probably never would. But in Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we can come competently before God in prayer to receive mercy.

Have his grace once again felt and bestowed upon us, who will help us in our time of need. And with God, you will never receive a busy signal, or you'll never have to leave a voicemail.

You'll never have to say, hey God, I'm, you know, I'm Mike. Remember, you saved me. It's been a while, but I'm that guy. He knows who you are. He knows who his children are.

[15:53] And his children always have his attention and his love. He will never get annoyed with you. In fact, let him pray in verse 13 is written in the present tense.

And that suggests a continual pleading with God in prayer. You could translate that verse as, let him keep praying. And the promise that we have repeatedly in Scripture is that when we pray, God will comfort us.

For example, Philippians 4, 6 through 7. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

We read in 2 Corinthians 1, 3 through 4. For blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

You know, in prayer, in those moments where you feel spiritually defeated, God may not change your circumstances in that moment, but he will change your attitude about them.

[17 : 21] In prayer, there have been many times where I felt just so weighed down by stress, by pressure, by anxious thoughts, worries, and fears.

And I've laid flat down on the ground before the Lord in prayer. And in those moments that I've done that, when I've risen, though my circumstances hadn't changed as far as I knew, my attitude about them had.

I received this strange sense of comfort. Has that ever happened to you?

Remember what James said about suffering in chapter 1, verses 2 through 4. He said, Now some believers, probably having suffered in the past and having received God's comfort and help during those times and remembering how God used those hard times to strengthen their faith, are able to face it, like James says in verse 13, cheerfully.

And in that case, James says, If that's you, then sing praises. Worship the Lord in those times, because you know that God works all things together for the good.

[19 : 00] I remember a time when I was visiting or I was going to visit a church member in my church in Kansas, and she had stage 4 cancer.

She was at home on hospice care, and she had had a hard life. She had suffered a lot. And so as I was driving there, I was thinking of what I could say to comfort her.

But as I drove up to her house, the first thing I saw was her smiling face in the front window waving at me. They had moved her bed to the front window so that she could watch the birds and the squirrels.

And she loved music. And so I knock on the door. She tells me to come in. And she had her stack of Christian CDs, and she was playing Christian music.

And I sat down at her bed. And she told me, Pastor, I know I'm going to heaven. And I'm ready for that.

[20 : 10] At my funeral, I don't want you to make a big deal about me. I don't want you to fuss over me. Because I know that a lot of my family will be there. And I know that a lot of them don't know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

So what I want you to do is preach the gospel to them that they, I hope, will know him too. And I prayed with her, and I left, and that was the last time I saw her alive.

And I went to comfort her in good health, right? I was in good health. But the joy she had, though she was suffering tremendously, comforted me.

Prayer provides comfort. Are you suffering? How much have you been praying? The next reason why there's power in prayer is that prayer brings restoration.

In verses 14 through 15. James asks, Is anyone among you sick? Let him call the elders of the church. Let them pray over them, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

[21 : 25] And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Now, the Greek word for sick at the beginning of verse 14 can refer to either a physical ailment or spiritual weakness.

We're being spiritually sick. And I think that in this context, that is the best fit. The Christians that James was writing to had been engaged in spiritual warfare, spiritual battles.

They were wounded spiritual warriors. Exhausted, weary, depressed Christians who were feeling defeated.

In that case, their spiritual weakness and weariness had affected their prayer life. And in that condition, they needed help from those who were spiritually strong in the church.

Something that, as 1 Thessalonians 5.14 encourages all of us Christians to do and to be. There we read, And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle.

[22 : 31] Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the spiritually weak. The weak. Be patient with them. All. This help, this strengthening, James says, is to come from the elders of the church.

An elder is to be a spiritually strong, a spiritually mature believer. The elders serve as God's shepherds, under-shepherds in his church.

They are tasked with tending to the wounded and exhausted sheep that God has placed under their care. Their job is to listen and intercede on the behalf of others.

But according to this verse, they are to be called upon. Now, our church has eight elders, including Pastor Tyler and myself. We are here for you to call upon us.

To lift you up in your time of need. To strengthen you. To encourage you. To pray for you. But this is a two-way street, I believe.

[23 : 37] On the one hand, the elders have the responsibility to hold themselves above reproach. To set an example of faith and maturity and devotion to Jesus Christ.

To demonstrate an attitude of love, care, and concern for the members of the church. And so, as elders, we need to know the people in our church.

We need to be accessible to you. And people whom you trust to be able to go to when you need comforting and help.

On the other hand, you aren't doing yourself any good if you try to put on a happy face, thinking either that you will be looked down upon because you are feeling spiritually weak, or are too prideful to admit that you need help.

You know, it makes me think of the weight room in high school and in college. You know, guys were always trying to impress each other with how much they could bench press.

[24 : 52] Especially when girls were in the room. And every once in a while, you had that guy who put a lot of weight on the bar, and, you know, you'd go over and ask, do you need a spotter?

And no, no, I got all this. You know, go away. Shoo, right? And lo and behold, maybe they get it up one time, but, oh, that second time it's about to come crashing down on them, and that would be really painful and embarrassing.

And I think as elders, that's part of our job. We're here to spot you. When life is hard, when you are stressed, when you are spiritually weak and weary, we are here to help bear your burden.

When James talks about anointing with oil, I think he's using that term not to describe some kind of religious ceremony, but what shepherds did for their sheep. They didn't have the advancements in medicine that we have today.

Back then, when your sheep had scratches and wounds, the shepherd would take oil and rub it in the wounds to soothe the sheep, to stop the bleeding, to help them heal.

[26 : 04] And it may have been the case that these persecuted believers had endured physical mistreatment as a result of the persecutions that they were going through, and elders may have come to them and bandaged their wounds and rubbed oil within them to soothe them, to help with the healing.

But I think James uses anointing here primarily in a metaphorical sense, as it was used in Isaiah chapter 1 verse 6. Let's read that. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds.

They are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. You see, then the people of Israel lacked godly leaders. They had no one to treat their spiritual wounds, no one to pray for them, no one who could be truly trusted or who truly trusted in God's ability to answer prayer or to help.

No leaders with a desire to be used by God to be that one who brings restoration to the spiritually weak and wounded. And so as James points out, sometimes the spiritual weakness experienced by a believer is the result of sin.

Sin makes the soul sick. And in this case, that case, the elders are to restore the sick soul to health by pointing that out, that they will confess and that they will be restored to spiritual health.

[27 : 48] Proverbs 28, 13 says, whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. In Psalms 38, we read David lamenting about the sickness of his soul because of his sin.

He says in verses 3 and 4, there is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation. There is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head like a heavy burden.

They are too heavy for me. God has given us each other. He has provided shepherds to his sheep. He is the God who restores through confession and repentance and forgiveness. If you are feeling spiritually weak this morning, if your soul is sick with sin, don't leave this place without calling an elder to come alongside of you.

We are here to fulfill this purpose. We desire your restoration. We desire your spiritual growth and maturity and health.

[29 : 01] And let me say this too. We pray for physically sick people. We gather and we lay our hands on them as we do that.

And I think that it's good that we do that because we believe that God at times, according to his will, provides healing through prayer. But we don't believe in those who support or use this verse for faith healing.

If those faith healers had the power they claim to have, then they should be putting hospitals out of business. Why aren't they doing that?

Why aren't they going to the hospitals and emptying them out? I wonder why. The third reason why there is power in prayer is prayer deepens fellowship.

Prayer deepens fellowship. Look again with me at the beginning of verse 16. Therefore, The church should be filled with people whom you trust.

[30 : 09] The church should be a place where you don't feel pressured to pretend as if you're doing okay. The church should be filled with people whom you trust.

People whom you confide in. And who won't break that confidence or use that information against you at some point later on.

And you know what? When you let people in, you will find that people care a lot more about you than you ever thought.

They will comfort you. They will be used by God to seek to restore you. And when that happens, that builds fellowship.

You know, how can you not love and care for someone whom you are praying for? So don't hold it in. Your sin will eat you away.

[31 : 13] It will make you miserable. Confess it to others. Confess it to God. Again, in Psalm 32, 3 through 5, we read David saying, For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity.

I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. You do yourself no good.

You do the fellowship of our church. No good if you keep closed up. If you don't unburden yourself. If you don't let your brothers and sisters in Christ serve you, help you, pray for you. And then the fourth reason why there is power in prayer is that prayer is powerful.

[32 : 18] I tried to find another synonym for powerful, and you know what? Nothing's as good as powerful. So, prayer is powerful. Look at the rest of verse 16 into verse 18.

The prayers of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. See, weak people pray weak prayers. Strong prayers.

Prayers come from strong people. The energetic prayers of a righteous person is a potent force in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

And so James gives the example of Elijah to remind us of that truth. You know, Elijah? Elijah was an Old Testament prophet. He was God's man seemingly against the entire world.

[33 : 21] Elijah's prayers brought a drought on the nation of Israel as punishment for their sinfulness. But when he prayed again, God sent rain.

How did he do it? How did Elijah do it? Did he have some kind of magical powers? Did he have some kind of incantation that we need to uncover and figure out?

You know, that we can command God as if he was some kind of genie? Did he name it and claim it? Was that how Elijah did it? Blab it and grab it? No.

No. James mentions that Elijah had a nature just like us. Elijah was hungry. Elijah was tired. Elijah was afraid. Elijah was depressed. There was a time where he prayed to God for death.

[34 : 20] Because of how sinful the people were. How hated he was. Elijah was a person. Just like you and me. It wasn't that Elijah had more of God than us.

It was that God had all of Elijah. Elijah. If James had physical illness in mind in this text, I don't think he would use Elijah as his example.

Because there's many other cases of prayers that resulted in miraculous healings. But he uses this one. He has spiritually weak people in mind.

His spiritually weak brothers and sisters in Christ. Who are like in a spiritual drought. And he's telling them that prayer has power.

That if you pray. That if you ask for help. If you will pray for one another. God will pour down his goodness.

[35 : 31] His graciousness. His love. His mercy. His forgiveness. On your parched soul. Have you ever been in a situation like that.

Where you just were spiritually drained. And parched. And weak. And weary. And you just felt like. Maybe like Huck Finn in my illustration at the beginning.

That what's going on with my prayers. They just don't seem to be working. Now I've shared this story with you before. But when I was in seminary.

I felt like I had made a complete mess. Of whatever this ministry thing was. That God had called me to. I grew up Nazarene. I ended up going to a Southern Baptist seminary.

And there's strange reasons why that was. They were basically the only school that was going to let me in. So I wound up there. I needed a job. And so I got a job as a youth pastor at a United Methodist Church.

[36 : 34] I had no idea what I was doing. And so I was in that job for three years. And what I really wanted to do. Is I wanted to be a chaplain in the Navy. That's why I went to seminary.

I was like I don't want to be a pastor. I don't want to be a youth pastor. I don't want to have anything to do with serving in the church. I want to be in the Navy. And that was what I was there to do.

Now there was a problem. And I'm three. I'm towards one semester away from graduating. And there's a problem. Because I can't get an endorsement from a denomination to be a chaplain in the Navy.

Because the Southern Baptists are like well you're not a member of a Southern Baptist Church. It's like well I can't be a member of the Southern Baptist Church. Because I work as a youth pastor in a United Methodist Church.

And I need that job. And the United Methodists were like we won't endorse you. And I didn't want to be endorsed by them. But they wouldn't endorse me anyways. Because they said you didn't graduate from one of our approved seminaries.

[37 : 36] And then the Nazarenes were like well you just basically abandoned us right. And now you're coming back and you want us to endorse you. They didn't say that. But that's kind of the gist that I got.

So here I am. A semester away from graduating. Praying to God. And I mean I tried to apply at other Southern Baptist churches. In the hopes that you know I can get in there.

And everything can get aligned. And I can go on and be a chaplain in the Navy. And I told Danny you know nothing's happening. I've applied at all these jobs. Nobody's interested. They all ask me you know basically okay you grew up Nazarene.

You work in a United Methodist Church. And you're going to a Southern Baptist seminary. How is that working out for you? And not very well obviously. Because I'm trying to get a job with your church.

Anyhow. I told Danny I was like I'm just going to have to quit my job. And get a position stocking shelves. Working in a warehouse.

[38 : 33] We'll join a Southern Baptist church. And eventually in time things will come together. But I was upset about that. Because I was about to graduate from seminary. And I'm ready for the Lord to unleash me on the world. You know what I'm saying? But anyhow that's where I was.

And I was just beat up. Weary God. Why this mess? How could you? Why didn't you prevent me from making all of these stupid decisions? And I'd been praying for this job to work out.

And it didn't work out. And this job to work out. And it didn't work out. And this thing to work out. And it didn't work out. And I was just down. And I was in the computer lab. In our seminary's library.

And I hadn't said anything. I was just looking at the computer screen. And probably seeing more people that were sending emails. Saying yeah we're not interested in you. And I don't know what it was.

But I had a classmate. He was in my preaching class. And you know me and him. You ever have somebody who is so much like you. That it's hard for you to get along with them?

[39 : 32] Okay. And we were kind of like that. Not adversaries. But just like you're so much like me. That I don't know. There's things about you that I see in myself that I don't like. So we can't be friends. But we were close enough.

And I just remember him coming over to me. And sitting down next to me. And he said Mike what's wrong? And I told him.

You know I didn't want to. But I told him. You know it was clear. He knew something was wrong.

And I told him. I've made a mess of everything. And this is what I'm trying to do.

And nothing is working out. And I'm frustrated man. I feel like God is not answering my prayers. And I'm tired. And I feel like I've just made a huge mistake and mess.

And he knelt down beside me. In that computer lab. People coming and going. Doing their own thing. And he prayed for me. And I don't remember his exact words.

[40 : 35] But I know that he prayed for me. About all the things that were going on in my life. And it wasn't a super long prayer. But it was a powerful prayer. And at the end of his prayer.

I said. Thank you. I needed that. And though again. As far as I knew. My circumstances weren't different. I felt better. And I went to class.

And I came back to the computer lab. And I had received an email. From Calvary Baptist Church. Where I ended up going. Where I ended up serving. Eventually as a senior pastor there. For five years.

And I realized. You know. God is. I was reminded again. Of the sovereignty of God. I hadn't made a mistake.

I hadn't messed things up. God had me. Where he. Wanted me. To be. Man. I. My fellowship. With that brother grew.

[41 : 33] My thankfulness. For that time. It doesn't always work that way. But it did in that case. And. And I remember receiving that email. And realizing.

Okay. Finally. There's somebody. There's a way out. Potentially. There's something going on. And. The song that came to my. Attention. Was. What a friend we have.

In Jesus. What a friend we have. In Jesus. All our sins. And griefs.

To bear. What a privilege. To carry. Everything to God. In prayer. Oh. What peace. We often forfeit. Oh. What needless pain. We bear. All because we do not carry. Everything to God. In prayer. Have we trials.

[42 : 28] And temptations. Is there trouble. Anywhere. We should never be discouraged. Take it to the Lord. In prayer. Can we find a friend.

So faithful. Who will. All. Our sorrows share. Jesus knows.

Our every weakness. Take it to. The Lord. In prayer. Are we weak. And heavy laden. Cumbered with a load of care.

Precious. Precious. Savior. We're still our refuge. Take it. To the Lord. In prayer. So the main application. For this morning's sermon.

Is make prayer a priority. Make prayer. A priority. Brother. Sister. Do not.

[43 : 27] Allow. Yourself. Or this world. Or the enemy. To convince you. That there is no power. In prayer. And today. May be a day.

Where. You realize. It's because of sin. That you feel. Spiritually weak. And you need to confess that. It may be. That you're just. In a.

And I. And I know you guys. I know the losses. That you've experienced. Over the past year or so. I know the pain. That you bear. I know the physical ailments.

That you have. I know the decisions. That you've made. Or. Or having to make in life. And how. Burdened you are by them. And so maybe today. Is just a time. Where you need to. Not give up. On what God does. Through prayer. And. And have someone pray. For you. Maybe you don't know. Jesus Christ at all. And you've never prayed.

[44 : 22] To him at all. And I hope that today. He's called out to you. Through his word. Come to me. Come to me. I am the good shepherd. I will unburden you.

Of your sin. I will give you. My righteousness. I've done it. By my sinless life. My sacrificial death. My victorious resurrection. Be my child. Know my love. My peace.

And my grace. Forever. Whatever the case may be. For you. We're going to sing that song. Here after I give you. Your application questions. And I encourage you. Whatever is. Most comfortable for you.

Pray. Where you're at. I'll be down here. I would love to pray. For somebody today. If somebody comes up here. And you see them praying. One thing I loved. When we were in Latvia. With our sister church there.

Is when people would come. Forward to pray. You never knew. What they were praying about. They just came forward. And someone else would come over. And just wrap their arm around them. And just stay with them. And pray for them. Until they were through.

[45 : 19] If that's what you need. To do today. I invite you. To do that. And again. I'll be right here. And I'd love to pray for you. Four questions of application. To discuss in your community groups tonight.

To look at later. This week as well. Question number one. What is the purpose of prayer? How have you seen. The purpose of prayer. Be misused.

Or misunderstood. What is the purpose of prayer? Question number two. Why does God not only want us. To confess our sins to him in prayer.

But also to one another. Then read Galatians 6.1-3. How should we respond to those. Who try to hide their sins? Question three.

How does James describe Elijah. And his prayer. How does this encourage you? How does it challenge you? How does it challenge you? And then finally.

[46 : 19] What do you need prayer for? And tonight in your community groups. Please be real with one another. Okay. Please express the prayer needs. That you truly have. What do you need prayer for?

Is there something you need to confess? Do you need to speak to an elder? Do you need someone to pray for you? And if the answer is yes. To any of those questions. Please don't leave. Our church building this morning.

Without having someone pray for you. Let's pray right now. Lord God. What a. What an amazing. Privilege it is.

That you give to us. To come right before you. To be right in your presence. Through the power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Which you've given us.

To come. Right in front of you. With our prayers. And know that you hear. And know that you respond. And know that you care.

[47 : 15] And know that you desire. To hear from us. Your children. God forgive us. Forgive me. That so often. We. We just don't treat prayer.

As if it's a priority. And when. If we're honest with ourselves. We would. We would have to confess. And admit. By. The little amount of time.

And prayer. That we spend. That we don't think. There's much power in it. God. We know you're sovereign. We know that you're good. We know that you work all things together. For the good. But father. We also know that as. The good and gracious. Heavenly father. That you are. That you desire. Our fellowship. And communication. With. With your children. Whom you love.

So Lord. I pray. That for each of us. We would leave. This place. Today. Convinced. By your Holy Spirit. That there is power. In prayer. And that we need.

[48 : 11] To be those. Who. Pray. We need. To be those. Who when we feel. Weak. And weary. And heavy laden. Who ask. Others.

To pray for us. We need. To be the kinds. Of people. Lord. Like you. Who when people. Ask us. To pray for them. That we pray for them. We don't just say. That we'll pray for them.

But we stop. What we're doing. And we pray for them. And God. We need to be. The kind of people. Who trust. That you desire. To show. How awesome.

You are. To us. Through. Answering. Our prayers. And so God. I pray. That we. As your church. Here at Highland Park. That we would be people. Who pray.

In Jesus name. I ask these things. Amen.